

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 RABAT 02790 231512Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----231516Z 006788 /50

O P 231425Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1974  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY  
USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 2790

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3  
TAGS: PFOR, UN, MO, US  
SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH WALDHEIM: SAHARA PROBLEM

REF: SECTO 4127

1. I APPRECIATE THE CHANCE TO COMMENT ON SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM'S APPROACH TO YOU ON THE SAHARA PROBLEM. WE ARE ALL ANXIOUS TO SEE AN END TO THE HUMAN SUFFERING, ECONOMIC DRAIN, AND POTENTIAL FOR ESCALATION THAT THIS PROLONGED GUERRILLA CONFRONTATION ENTAILS. I HAVE THOUGHT LONG AND HARD OVER THE PAST YEAR AS TO HOW WE MIGHT USEFULLY INVOLVE OURSELVES. UNFORTUNATELY, I DO NOT BELIEVE OUR INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORT OF WALDHEIM WOULD HAVE ANY USEFUL RESULT NOR DO I SEE ANY WAY THAT OUR NATIONAL INTEREST COULD BE OTHER THAN HURT BY THE INEVITABLE FAILURE OF A WALDHEIM INITIATIVE. OUR RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO WOULD BE UNDERMINED AND WE WOULD HAVE UNWISELY AND NEEDLESSLY INTRODUCED AN ELEMENT OF SUPERPOWER INVOLVEMENT INTO A SITUATION WHICH HAS DEVOLVED ONTO A REGIONAL BODY.

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2. THE PROBLEM IS NOT ONE OF A LACK OF COMMUNICATION NOR OF WOULD-BE MEDIATORS MORE OR LESS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES. INDEED THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN A LONG SERIES OF ABORTIVE MEDIATION OR GOOD-OFFICE ATTEMPTS BY THIRD PARTIES. THE MOST SERIOUS, BEGUN BY SAUDI ARABIA LATE LAST YEAR, HAS NOW COME TO A COMPLETE STANDSTILL, ACCORDING TO MY SAUDI COLLEAGUE HERE. EARLIER

EGYPTIAN, IRAQI, TURKISH AND SENEGALESE EFFORTS MET THE SAME FATE. THE BASIC REASON FOR FAILURE WAS NOT A LACK OF MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS, AS DIRECT CONTACTS HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST WITHOUT BENEFIT OF INTERMEDIARIES. INSTEAD, THERE HAS SIMPLY BEEN INSUFFICIENT SUBSTANTIVE BASIS FOR BRINGING THE TWO ANTAGONISTS TO AN AGREEMENT. AS WALDHEIM POINTED OUT (PARA 6 REFTEL), MOROCCO CONSIDERS SAHARA SOVEREIGNTY SETTLED. MEANWHILE, CONTINUED ALGERIAN SUPPORT OF THE POLISARIO GUERRILLAS AGAINST MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA AUGURS ILL EVEN FOR A LESSENING OF TENSIONS, LET ALONE A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA.

3. UN INVOLVEMENT IN THE SAHARA PROBLEM HAS LEFT THE MOROCCANS EXTREMELY WARY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE RYDBECK MISSION LAST SPRING WHICH THEY CONSIDERED PRO-ALGERIAN. WHILE WALDHEIM'S IMAGE IN RABAT MAY HAVE IMPROVED SOMEWHAT, ACCORDING TO FORMER MOROCCAN UN PERM REP ALI BENJELLOUN'S COMMENTS TO ME ON MAY 20, WALDHEIM'S CAUTION ABOUT AGAIN INVOLVING HIMSELF (PARA 6 REFTEL) IS UNDOUBTEDLY WELL-FOUNDED. SHOULD THE UNITED STATES BECOME DIRECTLY ENGAGED IN SUPPORTING NEW MOVES BY WALDHEIM, MOROCCAN SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE UN WOULD INEVITABLY RUB OFF ON US. WE SHOULD ALSO BEAR IN MIND ALREADY EXISTING MOROCCAN CONCERN OVER (A) AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S MEETING IN MAPUTO WITH A POLISARIO REPRESENTATIVE AS THE HARBINGER OF A CHANGE IN OUR NEUTRAL POLICY ON THE SAHARA (RABAT 2778), AND (B) CLARK CLIFFORD'S MAY 11-12 PRIVATE VISIT TO ALGIERS WHICH WAS NOTED HERE.

4. WE SHOULD RECALL THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LAST FALL DEFERRED TO THE OAU, WHOSE 1976 MAURITIUS SUMMIT VOTED FOR A YET-TO-BE-HELD

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EXTRAORDINARY OAU SUMMIT ON THE SAHARA. AT LEAST THREE EFFORTS TO HOLD THIS SUMMIT HAVE ABORTED BECAUSE ONLY SEVEN OR EIGHT CHIEFS OF STATE OF RADICAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE AGREED TO ATTEND. WITH A MINIMUM OF TWENTY-SIX REQUIRED, THE CHANCES OF THIS MEETING TAKING PLACE ARE NIL. AND THIS PROSPECT, I MIGHT ADD, IS WHY THE ALGERIANS ARE LEANING ON WALDHEIM TO REENGAGE THE UN IN AN EFFORT TO REVERSE THE DIPLOMATIC SETBACKS SUFFERED DURING THE PAST YEAR.

5. WALDHEIM'S SUBSTANTIVE IDEAS AND OTHER COMMENTS OUTLINED REFTEL BEAR CRITICAL EXAMINATION. "AUTONOMY" FOR THE SAHARA, FOR EXAMPLE, IS A NON-STARTER. THE SAHARA HAS BEEN FULLY INCORPORATED INTO MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA, BOTH ADMINISTRATIVELY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 3 WILL BE PORTRAYED AS STILL ANOTHER ACT OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE TERRITORY. WE DO NOT FORESEE THAT THE KING WILL RETREAT TO ANY LOOSER ARRANGEMENT THAN FULL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE SAHARA. HIS PRESTIGE HAS NEVER BEEN HIGHER AS A RESULT OF HIS SAHARA POLICY, WHICH IS SOLIDLY

BACKED BY MOROCCANS OF EVERY POLITICAL STRIPE.

6. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THE ALGERIANS HAVE PUT OUT FEELERS FOR A FACE-SAVING FORMULA. BEOUTEFLIKA DID THIS PRIVATELY IN AUGUST, 1976 AT COLOMBO WITH A CONFIDANT OF KING HASSAN (76 RABAT 4825). THE PROBLEM THEN AND SINCE HAS BEEN VERY CLEAR. AT THE RABAT SUMMIT OF OCTOBER 1974, BOUMEDIENE AGREED TO A SOLUTION OF THE SAHARA BETWEEN MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA, AN EVENTUALITY HE PROBABLY EXCLUDED BECAUSE AT THAT TIME: (A) HIS RELATIONS WITH MAURITANIA WERE CLOSE, (B) MAURITANIA'S RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO WERE AT BEST CORRECT, AND (C) THE PROBABILITY OF OBTAINING THE TERRITORY FROM SPAIN WAS MINIMAL. BOUMEDIENE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY FORCED TO REVERSE HIS POSITION. SUCH AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SUCCESS BY THE CONSERVATIVE, MONARCHIAL REGIME TO HIS WEST WAS NOT IN THE INTEREST OF SOLIDIFYING HIS POSITION IN THE REVOLUTIONARY, SOCIALIST SOCIETY HE IS ATTEMPTING TO CREATE. IN SHORT, THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ONLY FACE-SAVER HE HAS IN MIND IS FOR HASSAN TO GIVE UP THE SAHARA, WHICH WOULD BREAK THE TIES BETWEEN MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO AND WEAKEN THE MONARCHY.

7. AS FOR ALGERIAN DESIRE FOR A FACE-SAVING SOLUTION BEFORE THE JULY OAU SUMMIT IN GABON, MOROCCANS DO NOT VIEW ALGERIAN DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY AS A SINCERE ATTEMPT TO FIND A SOLUTION. THEY BELIEVE THE ALGERIANS ARE MOUNTING A COMBINED DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY STRATEGY, INCLUDING INTENSIFICATION OF GUERRILLA WARFARE AS REFLECTED IN MAY 1 RAID AGAINST ZOUERATE, WITH THE AIM OF KEEPING THE SAHARA DISPUTE PROMINENTLY BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WITH THE APPROACH OF JULY 2 OAU SUMMIT IN LIBREVILLE AND ULTIMATELY THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. MOROCCANS WOULD SEE A WALDHEIM INITIATIVE AND ITS SUPPORTERS AS PLAYING INTO ALGERIAN HANDS.

8. FINALLY, WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF ALGERIAN CLAIM ABOUT MASSING OF MOROCCAN TROOPS ON THE ALGERIAN BORDER (PARA 4 REFTTEL) AND CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF A MOROCCAN PREEMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST TINDOUF AS UNLIKELY BARRING A SERIOUS ESCALATION OF TENSIONS.

9. WE NOTE PRESS REPORT THAT WALDHEIM MET SEPARATELY WITH MOROCCAND AND ALGERIAN REPRESENTATIVES IN GENEVA ON MAY 20 TO DISCUSS SAHARA SITUATION. MY STAFF AND I BELIEVE THAT IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO LET WALDHEIM EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WITH THE MOROCCANS AND ALGERIANS. OUR GUESS IS THAT BOTH MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA WILL WISH TO REMAIN WITH LAST FALL'S UNGA DECISION TO DEFER TO THE OAU, AND THAT WALDHEIM'S REINVOLVEMENT IN THE SAHARA PROBLEM WILL NOT BE WELCOMED. ANDERSON

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009